

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 152

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to create a special joint study committee relative to certain institutions of higher education.

WHEREAS, Tennessee has twenty-six technology centers and thirteen community colleges; and

WHEREAS, it would be prudent to examine the efficacy of merging technology centers with existing community colleges; and

WHEREAS, there may be duplicate administrative job functions at technology centers that may be centralized at a community college; and

WHEREAS, it is important to identify dissimilarities in units of study and graduation requirements for similar technology programs offered at technology centers and community colleges; and

WHEREAS, to improve services to students it is essential to identify barriers impeding the articulation process for graduates of a technology center who desire to continue their technical education at a community college in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, it is in the interest of Tennessee to identify barriers impeding the dual enrollment process for high school students seeking postsecondary training in a technical field at a technology center or a community college; and

WHEREAS, originally established in 1963 as state area vocational-technical schools, one of the twenty-six technology centers, as they are known today, is located within fifty miles of every resident of the state and a short distance from a two-year community college, which also serves students who commute to class daily; and

WHEREAS, in many instances, community colleges offer technical training and diploma programs of a similar nature as those offered at a technology center; however, units of study are not uniform. As a result, it is at the discretion of each community college whether graduates of training programs at technology centers receive full academic credit for prior work toward an associate degree at a community college in a similar field, e.g. business systems technology, welding, automotive, practical nursing; and

WHEREAS, unlike a community college in Tennessee, a high school diploma or G.E.D. is not required for admission to most training programs offered by a technology center, except practical nursing, business systems and electricity-electronics, to mention a few; and

WHEREAS, training programs offered at technology centers may be completed in twelve to twenty months while those at community colleges require two years of study. At technology centers there are designated exit points in the curriculum which allow students to leave the program after completing the required units of study for each desired segment, e.g. brakes, front-end alignment, as in the case of an automotive program. A Certificate of Completion is awarded to students who complete the required units of study; and

WHEREAS, existing classroom and shop/laboratory space may not be sufficient to accommodate the fluctuating student headcount at technology centers, which have an open enrollment policy for students. New students may be admitted to the program, subject to space limitations in classrooms and shop/lab areas, at the beginning of any trimester term during the twelve-month school year, another distinction from a community college; and

WHEREAS, while state appropriations are based on two different criteria, full-time equivalency (FTE) at universities and community colleges and contact (clock) hours at technology centers, there is a need to consider the student headcount at technology centers in determining the adequacy of physical facilities, i.e. classrooms and

laboratory/shop areas. Technology center students attend school four days a week, for a total of thirty training hours per week; and

WHEREAS, a merger of technology centers and community colleges would ensure uniform units of study in each technical training program and provide additional faculty to support similar training programs at a technology center and community college and provide trained faculty back-up when needed. The number of administrative staff and faculty, both full-time and part-time, varies at each technology center and community college; and

WHEREAS, duplicative student recruitment efforts would also be eliminated through the coordination of high school visits, providing student financial assistance, marketing, advertising, and public relations activities, as well as centralizing administrative purchases and expenses, e.g. purchase of textbooks and administrative and shop supplies, for technology centers at the community college level. In most instances, both institutions are duplicating efforts to recruit the same students; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that there is hereby created a special joint committee to study the combining of Tennessee technology centers with Tennessee's community colleges.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall:

(1) Develop benchmark student drop-out rates, job placement rates and licensure pass rates of graduates of technology centers and community colleges;

(2) Identify the pupil-teacher ratio and average training cost per student, by technical training program, at technology centers and community colleges in Tennessee; and

(3) Recommend any other legislative studies and/or legislative act introductions that may be required to facilitate the merger and operational cost-

savings to improve the quality of technical educational training for students in Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that during its deliberations, the special joint committee shall study the various sources of revenue used to fund Tennessee's technology centers and community college system, investigate present and anticipated infrastructure needs, and establish priorities to be considered in the future, i.e. student enrollment by training program and employer job training needs in the region, prior to the allocation of capital dollars by the general assembly for infrastructure at technology centers and community colleges and identify a plan to use resources in the most efficient and responsible means for the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the committee shall consist of nine (9) members as follows:

Three (3) members of the house of representatives, to be appointed by the speaker of the house;

Three (3) members of the senate, to be appointed by the speaker of the senate;

One (1) member who shall represent technology centers, to be appointed by the governor;

One (1) member who shall represent community colleges, to be appointed by the governor; and

One (1) member of the public-at-large, to be appointed by the governor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair. The National Conference of State Legislatures is also requested to provide assistance to the committee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the general assembly shall remain

members of such committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the general assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that non-legislative members of the special joint committee shall serve without compensation except for reimbursement of per diem travel expenses. All reimbursement for travel expenses shall be in accordance with the provisions of the comprehensive travel regulations as promulgated by the department of finance and administration and approved by the attorney general and reporter.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the general assembly, and at its first meeting shall elect from among its legislative membership a chair, vice-chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the One Hundred Sixth General Assembly no later than February 15, 2010, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.